

La Salle University

La Salle University Digital Commons

Grimoire

University Publications

2008

Grimoire Vol. 47 2007-2008

La Salle University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/grimoire>

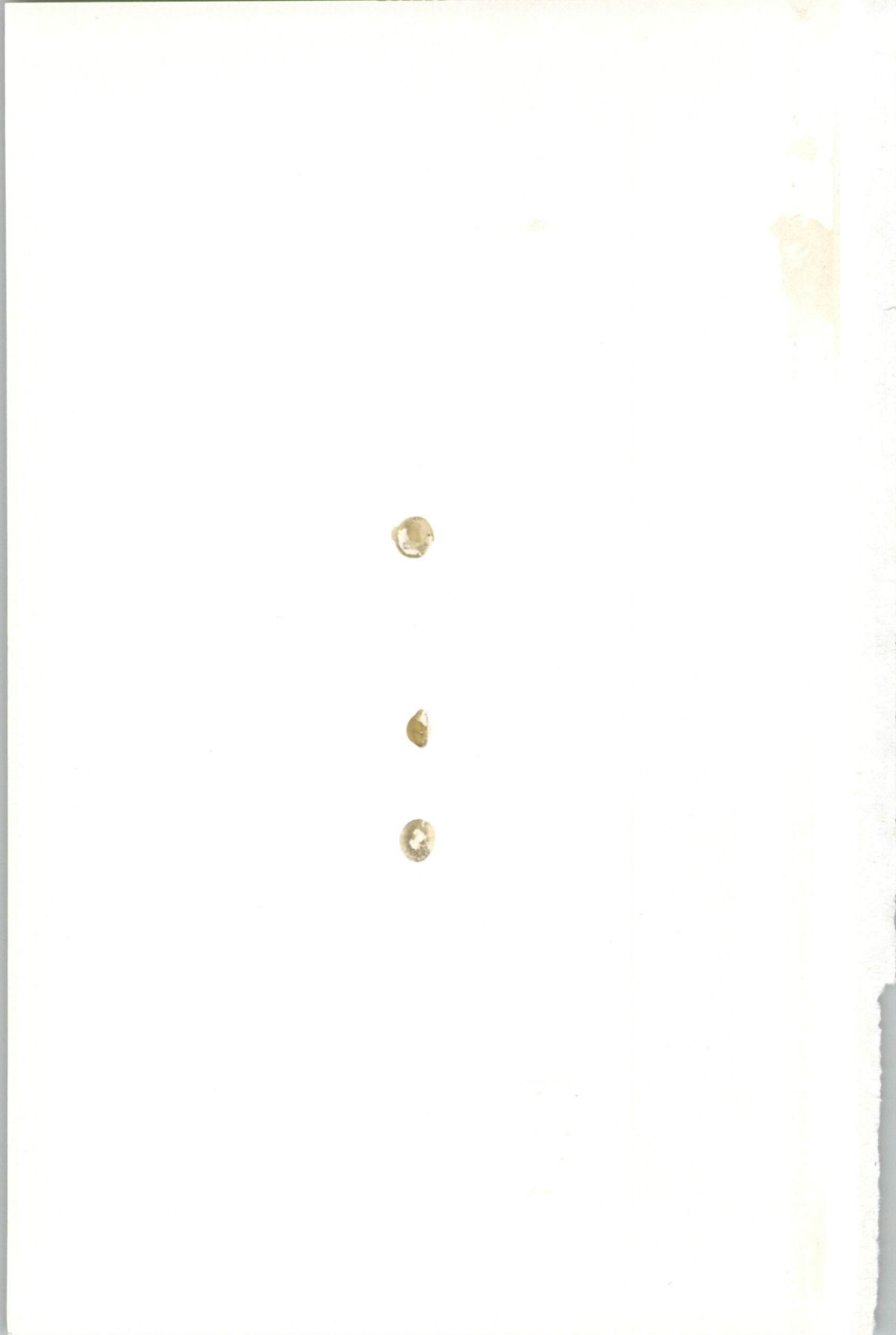
Recommended Citation

La Salle University, "Grimoire Vol. 47 2007-2008" (2008). *Grimoire*. 70.
<https://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/grimoire/70>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at La Salle University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Grimoire by an authorized administrator of La Salle University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact careyc@lasalle.edu.

GRIMOIRE





Grimoire

2007 - 2008

VOLUME 47



Contents

ART

- 10 UNTITLED || ALEX FIGUEROA
- 21 UNTITLED || KATIE ELKINS
- 22 SURREAL BACKGROUND || PAT KIRLIN
- 31 LILLY AND THE FISH || BYARD BRIDGE
- 38 WESTERN SCENE || PAT KIRLIN
- 62 PAINT || KATIE ELKINS

POETRY

- 9 ART IS RELIGION, RELIGION ART || CARA CONOCER
- 15 ITHACA PLAYGROUND || JONATHAN JULIANO
- 20 COLD AND ALONE || LUCIAN TUCKER
- 23 GOODBYE MY SUN || JONATHAN JULIANO
- 24 CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT IT'S LIKE? || GIA DATTILO
- 25 THE MCMANSIONS OF BUCKS COUNTY || RAMIN MAJD
- 25 VALENTINE'S DAY || MEGAN PALOS
- 32 THE SCIENCE || RETHNA EDDY
- 33 PRECIOUS || CARA CONOCER
- 37 SWEEPING THE KITCHEN FLOOR || MEGAN PALOS
- 43 THE ELEGY TO FRIENDS || CARA CONOCER
- 45 UNTITLED || RETHNA EDDY
- 52 STACCATO LOVE || LUCIAN TUCKER

PROSE

- 11 THE EARLY YEARS || MEGAN PALOS
- 12 DON'T TURN AROUND || AUDREY L. LOCASTRO
- 13 A GLIMPSE || RETHNA EDDY
- 16 HOME || MARK NATALE
- 27 FIRST AT BAT || MARK NATALE
- 30 CHANGING SEASONS || LUCIAN TUCKER
- 31 FOR YOU || MEGAN PALOS
- 34 SUITCASE SENTINELS || JONATHAN JULIANO
- 39 GOOD GRIEF || LUCIAN TUCKER
- 46 HUNTING || LAUREN BALLIET
- 53 ROLE MODEL || SEAN DEAN
- 61 SEDUCTION || MEGAN PALOS
- 63 THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME || LUCIAN TUCKER
- 66 WISHING STARS || MEGAN PALOS

Staff

EDITORS

JON JULIANO

LUCIAN TUCKER

STAFF

DANIELLE HAFFER

LIZ TABASKO

LAUREN BALLIET

NICK FORD

CHRISTINE KEELY

JILLIAN SHOTZBARGER

MARK NATALE

ADVISOR

KEVIN GRAUKE

LAYOUT DESIGN

LUCIAN TUCKER

COVER DESIGN

JOEL TEJADA

La Salle Univerity encourages freedom of expression. However, the creative content of this journal represents the views of the authors only; these views may or may not be in accordance with the views of La Salle University and/or the Division of Student Affairs.

Letter From The Editor(s)

By opening to the first page and reading this sentence you may have already won \$100,000. Okay, maybe not, but the 2007-2008 issue of the *Grimoire* is rich with creativity, metaphors, and imagery.

While writing this introduction we thought about what being in the *Grimore* means to contributors, readers, and the school. To contributors, the *Grimore* is an outlet for artistic expression. At the very least, it is a footprint in time. Contributors can look back at how they felt at the exact moment they wrote their piece or created their artwork. To readers, pieces in this magazine are beyond good and interesting. It is an expression of their peers, and a great insight into other people's perspectives. For the school, the magazine is a way to look at its students' thoughts and ideas through an alternative fashion, and get a better sense of their students.

That poem on page twenty-five, or that story on page fourteen may not be the latest talk among the water cooler. The *Grimoire* may be under the radar, but it is necessary, even if it only helps one person come out of their shell and submit something for the first time. Even if someone has to remain anonymous, it's necessary.

Keep on arting,

Jonathan Juliano & Lucian Tucker

Art is Religion, Religion Art

CARA CONOCER

I worship at the altar
Where pen and paper meet
In a clash of the mind and soul
This ritual brings me ever closer

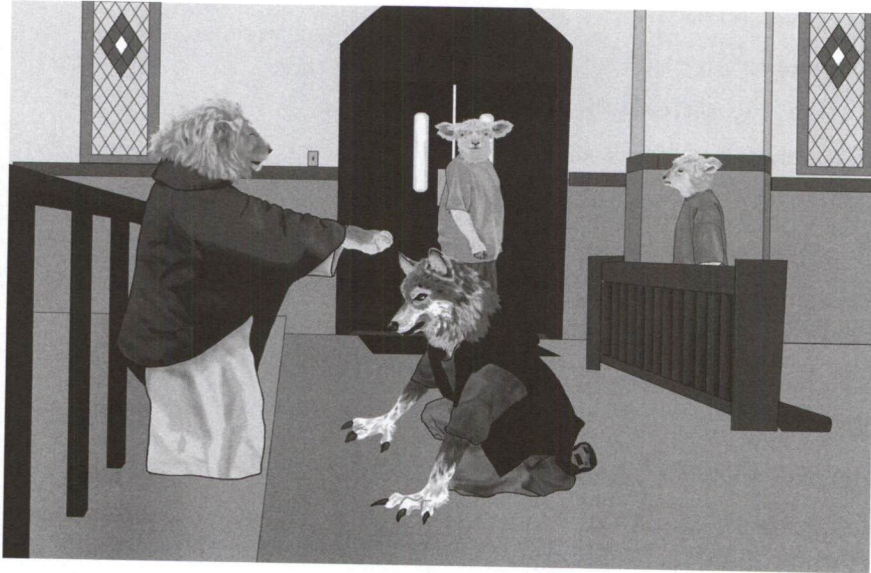
My God is creativity
The provider of all that I am
Spirituality flows from this body
Interconnected to the blessed hand

My words are infinite prayers
To above, below, and all around
Hoping to be read and remembered
So the truth may spring through

I am devout in my conviction
Baptizing my very being in ink
Wait until the idea comes by angels in a dream
Setting my destiny in stone and the prayers to print

Untitled

ALEX FIGUEROA



The Early Years

MEGAN PALOS

Amethyst, amber, and scarlet fused into each other, creating a technicolor sky. The water reflected the last bursts of sunlight and cast a ginger glow on our naturally bronze skin. We sunk our toes into the soft white sand, squeezing slightly and releasing reluctantly while we said good-bye to the lake. As we looked at each other and exhaled our final breath of summer, a breeze passed us and jostled my hair. His lips parted to reveal his boyish smile. I felt color and warmth dash to my face as he raised his hand and gently pushed my hair behind my ear. I smiled to myself as we began to walk away and I knew that it was love.

I was only four, but I already had my ideas about exactly what constituted love. Love was when Trevor gave me his cookie after mine fell on the moist earth. Love was when Trevor tied my shoes for me in his special four-leaf clover style. Love was when Trevor took my drawings home to hang on his refrigerator despite their comparability to a scribbled mess. It was these little acts of kindness, exchange of adoring words, and gracious smiles that watered the seed that was yearning to grow in my little heart.

Don't Turn Around

AUDREY L. LOCASTRO

I walk down these streets alone in my mind,
I know everything worth holding onto takes time.
I feel my insides torturing me, slowly caving in,
My heart never fails to remind me of where I've been.
Inhaling my cigarette smoke fills my lungs and another second ticks by,
I no longer know who I am; I desperately need to remember how to fly.
When I was young everything was different, new,
Now everything is old like the sole on the bottom of my shoe.
Things seem to happen too late, never when they should,
There's a place in the autumn leaves where I once stood.
Everything made sense when that fall came,
Something came to take it away, nothing has been the same.
My heart beats not in my chest but now in my stomach,
My lungs are starving for air like I'm standing on a mountain's summit.
Being ripped from what you know is not easy to bear,
Sometimes I sit alone and I just stare.
Stare into the unknown hoping for someone to save me,
Or waiting for my turn to die, it will happen eventually.
Forcing my chin up my blue eyes change from dull to bright,
Determined I will attack this new life with all my might.

A Glimpse

RETHNA EDDY

It was a cloudy morning, the sky a slate gray and the air crisp. Cold. Clean cut. The one floor apartment complex I splurged on, overlooked the busy city. My satin sheets rustled beneath me as I walked closer to my screen windows. I looked back at my richly furnished room and thought about how much work I put in to get here. My Apple laptop was on my red oak desk, an array of papers decorating it in a messy way, the only thing out of place in my elaborate abode. There were black-framed pictures of me on the walls in every place imaginable across the globe. I must say my favorites were Italy, India, and Egypt. I made the Columbian coffee I picked up on my last visit and let the rich steam envelope me as I mentally arranged my tasks, high priority to low.

Being a journalist and best selling novelist was hard work but I could not imagine being something else. The deadlines, the pressure, the taste of pure journalism are what runs in my veins. The past few years have been monumental for my career since I published three best selling novels and I was moving my way up on the staff of the New York Times. The phone rang suddenly, jostling me out of my reverie. "Ms. Eddy, this is Jackson, your agent. How's that new novel coming?" says my anxious agent in a rush. He was a well-organized man in his mid 40s, even though he was always a nervous wreck. I smiled to myself as I took out a manuscript I was working on. "I'll email you the first four chapters Jackson, just let me know what you think," I told him. My latest idea was a highly anticipated murder mystery novel.

I slipped on my pinstriped dress pants and white blouse. My hair was polished, my lips a professional pink, my eyes outlined in deep kohl. My Manolo heels went on last, completing the image of professionalism. I looked the part of a nine-year writer on the staff of the New York Times. I dripped self-confidence and authority, something that took years for me to flaunt. The Times was only my day job; I spent my nights writing novels. I was blending my love of creative literature with my desire to inform. It has created a good balance in my life because even though I had made enough money not to have a steady job,

working at the Times kept me sane. I was used to the hustle and bustle of the office, the biting sarcasm that was so common with my realist journalists, and the world that it opened up for me. Being in journalism has allowed me to meet so many different people and learn about things that I could never have known otherwise. I stopped my daydreaming about my two dream jobs and walked briskly to the elevator.

Sam, my doorman, already called a cab for me. I thanked him and rushed out the door. The busy day always started like this, my leather case filled with interviews to schedule and leads to follow. The cab door was already open and I took a moment to glance around at the metropolis I called home. It was my concrete sanctuary, the place where news was never hard to find. It came to us.

"New York Times Building, 8th Avenue," I directed my cab driver. I laid back and relaxed before I would be bombarded with deadlines, calling every lead, and discussing further topics. One of my favorite places in the world besides my study in the apartment, the Times offered me mental stimulation. The ride was shorter than I thought. I craned my neck as I stared at the state of art building, only finished in November of 2007. "Good Morning Ms. Eddy, the Ambassador from Russia is here for that interview you requested, should I direct him into your office?" I smiled at Jen, my faithful assistant. "Yes, Jen. Yes you can," I said, savoring every word. It was showtime."

Ithaca Playground

JONATHAN JULIANO

Boys' and girls' feet pitter patter on the playground to my left
Steps so light the shoeprints resemble feathers.
Headaches come to mind as I step into their sneakers kicking back and forth
Wishing I could be the one on the swing set.
It would be fun for ten minutes before my head would hurt for climbing too high,
Neither man nor child were meant to fly.

Children pure like they were birthed out Brita filters
Me or them who really holds more knowledge
Simplicity is Beautiful.

Jim Carroll the basketball diarist, the Spalding poet,
All he ever wanted was to be that pure
Maybe I'll start my own search here
Ithaca is Gorges

Home

MARK NATALE

It was impossible to sleep any longer with the blaring sound in my ears. I turned and slapped off the alarm, pushing myself up with a bit of a struggle. I remember when that noise brought a sinking feeling of disappointment at the prospects of leaving a comfortable slumber. In later days, it would be frustration at the thought of toiling through another day. By now, the unwelcome noise was met with the same numb indifference that seemed to compose most of my feelings.

I sat at the edge of the bed, rubbing my eyes while staring through the bedroom window. The blinds had been opened for me, showcasing a parking lot filled with young kids and bright book bags; scampering, yelling, teasing and waiting for the bus. I stood up slowly, stretched, and attempted to walk the soreness out of my legs. Dragging into the bathroom, I flicked on the light, washed my face with cool water and began the ritual morning preparations.

When I emerged down the hallway adorning my work cloths, I was met with the subtle aroma of breakfast and the soft vibrations of the morning news. I sat down at the table and turned up the small TV that occupied the otherwise empty spot. The commentators were discussing last night's game, a 9th inning bloop single for the win. I had missed it. I heard footsteps coming from the back room and saw my mother step into the kitchen.

"Good morning Tony." She bent down and kissed my forehead as I kept my eyes fixated on the TV. "You sleep well?" I grunted.

"You tired? Here." She put a biscotti and a cup of coffee in front of me. I poked at the food, tasted it a bit, and sipped on the coffee while shifting my attention to a magazine left on the table. My mother had continued ironing her uniform, and I enjoyed the calmness of the soft TV news, the nondescript tune my mother was humming, and the distant chatter of the school children outside. I sat back, pushing the food away, nursing my mug and frequently checking my watch.

"Oh, I missed the bus." My mother threw on the vest she was ironing, unplugged the iron and scampered to grab her shoes. She came back and kissed me again on the cheek. "I'll be back at 4. Have a good day at work." She slid out in a rush. She was early, as always.

I sat for a few more moments, with the TV off now, and the house silent. Finally I heard a honk outside and I rose quickly, sliding my plate and glass on the counter. I grabbed my toolbox from beside the sofa. Stopping for a second to look around the room, I grabbed my faded baseball cap from among a pair of opened textbooks on the coffee table and stepped out of the apartment into the bright summer sun. Throwing my box in the back, I stepped into the cab of the pick up, barely exchanging acknowledgments with the driver as we pulled away from my home. For awhile we sat in silence. I looked out the window as the suburban landscape slowly became more rural, and the roads emptied out, making the hum of the engine more prominent.

"Your mom work at Wal-Mart?" Matt asked, probably doubling the words exchanged up to that point.

"Yes she does. Why do you ask?" I glanced over to the driver's side, a bit confused at the pretense of the question.

"Saw a short European lady running to the bus stop in a Wal-Mart vest. Thought it might be her. 'Should have let me know, I could've dropped her off at the stop.'"

"Thanks, but she wouldn't have waited. She always thinks she's much later than she is."

"Fair enough." He turned on a country radio station as we approached a stop light. "She like it there?" I wondered how awkward the previous silence made him that we were now talking about my mom's employment.

"I guess. She just likes to work. She is popular there from what I hear. Everybody loves the old lady with the cute accent greeting them at the door and handing them stickers." I smiled a bit at the thought of my short round mother greeting tall bright Americans at the door. Matt, probably thinking the same thing, chuckled a bit.

"That's good then. Its funny, I saw her today and just by looking at her I thought she walked right off the boat. With you, there's the trace of an accent, but that's it." He laughed again.

"Yeah," I smiled back. You could never tell how hard she tries. She insists on speaking English even as she fumbles with it. She doesn't even talk much of home

anymore.”

We reached another stop sign and Matt looked over a map he had kept on the dashboard. He nodded to himself as he put it back, the light now green and the car continuing.

“Are you glad, you know, that you two moved here?”

My eyes shot over to the driver seat as Matt adjusted in his seat, notably a bit uncomfortable with asking such a serious question. I too was taken back. Matt and I had been working together for a few months now, and he had been driving me for about three weeks (once he learned we lived in the same apartment complex). But throughout this we exchanged nothing more than casual acknowledgments, distanced by over a decade in age and a difference of direction. Such a serious question was indeed unexpected.

I sighed as I thought about it, glancing out my window. Suddenly I realized how tired I was, how sore my body was, and how much I regretted leaving that bed an hour or so ago.

“I guess so.” I bent the chair back and rested my foot on the dash. “I mean it’s been six years. ‘Can’t really complain I guess.”

“Ah, so a bit before high school then? Man, I remember moving to the next town in middle school. I thought that was rough”. We both laughed a bit.

“Well, had to do what we had to do.”

“Yeah...that’s right. War and such. Had forgotten about that for a moment.” It was a bit comedic how he mentioned it so offhand. “You seem to be making good on your opportunity though. Still going to school right?”

“Yes sir,” I said through a wry smile. It was a common question on the jobsite. The older workers always making sure I hadn’t decided to drop out.

But part of me still wasn’t satisfied with “making good.” We continued to drive to the forgotten country music as I went over the recent months. For a few years I’d wake up early for school, go to work right after class and come home only for a late dinner and even later schoolwork. Now it was reversed. Wake up early, go to a jobsite all day, and go to class at night through the exhaustion of construction labor; day after day, week after week. I thought about the toll I could now feel on my mind and body, on the countless evenings my mother and I ate in silence, the days off I spent almost entirely in bed, the nights I toiled over our bills, the afternoons shopping with coupons we spent hours clipping. I sat

and thought about all of this, the smile gone from my face, until eventually I needed to say something.

"It's been hard, you know. Not as easy as we all thought."

I said that after there had been enough silence that the conversation was deemed over. Matt looked over at me as he turned down the radio, this time he was the one surprised at the severity of my comment.

"Oh yeah? Tough. Imagine that." He chuckled. We turned at the next light as the jobsite came into view. I had no reply for his unsympathetic response.

"Well what's the alternative? If things are so tough now..." He glanced over to me. There was a touch of bitterness in his voice, as if I over stepped my bounds by complaining. I didn't answer right away. I didn't have an answer.

Instead I thought back to home. I thought about standing on the rocky beaches, enjoying the cool Mediterranean breeze. I thought swimming through clear water that met the sun at a never ending blue horizon. I thought about hot afternoons spent running through the cobblestoned alleys of my youth, of the strong scent of seafood emanating through the stone windows of my mother's kitchen. I remember the simplicity of each day, caused by the naivety of youth and the calmness of a different lifestyle.

"I don't know. I mean the war is over..." I didn't finish that thought. I was still glossing over those memories.

"Ah," it was now Matt who spoke through a wry grin. "So you want to go back? And what would your mom think of that? The rest of your family?"

I had not really thought much about either possibility before. Maybe it was because I had never talked about it, never entertained the idea. I knew the answer, so I never felt the need to bring it up.

"My mom loves it here. Never had a better life she says. My relatives want to come. Some say it's still not the same. Others, they just want a chance I guess."

Matt smiled some more. "But not you eh?" He glanced down at me. "A Job and an education not enough?"

We began pulling into the jobsite as I let the sarcastic question sit. There probably were no jobs at home and I knew the education would not be nearly as good. But there would be rest, there would be peace of mind, there would be cool evening breezes and summer nights at the bay. There would be wine, there would be old friends, there would be

family; and nobody, not a single one of them, would have a cent.

"There's more than just that, you know." I shot back. There was a bit of angst in my voice that Matt picked up on as we parked the car. He looked over, his grin still ever present

"You're absolutely right." He unbuckled his seatbelt and got out of the truck as I followed. We went around to the back and grabbed our tools.

"But you know," Matt said as he turned to the half finished building, forcibly putting on his hard hat. "If you really meant it, you would have already left."

Cold and Alone

LUCIAN TUCKER

It's funny—I've never seen you, still, I always write you letters.

Send you photo's of my face. I knitted you a sweater

When the weather got cold, with a note:

"Please forgive me," with a reminder to wear your coat.

When we first met, I was nervous—

Nervous on the inside. Calm on the surface.

I didn't tell my mother, brother, father—just a friend.

Kelly. Sometimes I feel she's my only friend. But then again...

There's you. Ignore the ink smears—their just tears.

I'm ready to be a mother, so, come home dear!

To cry by my side—cry with me.

Signed: Your mother. Please forgive me.

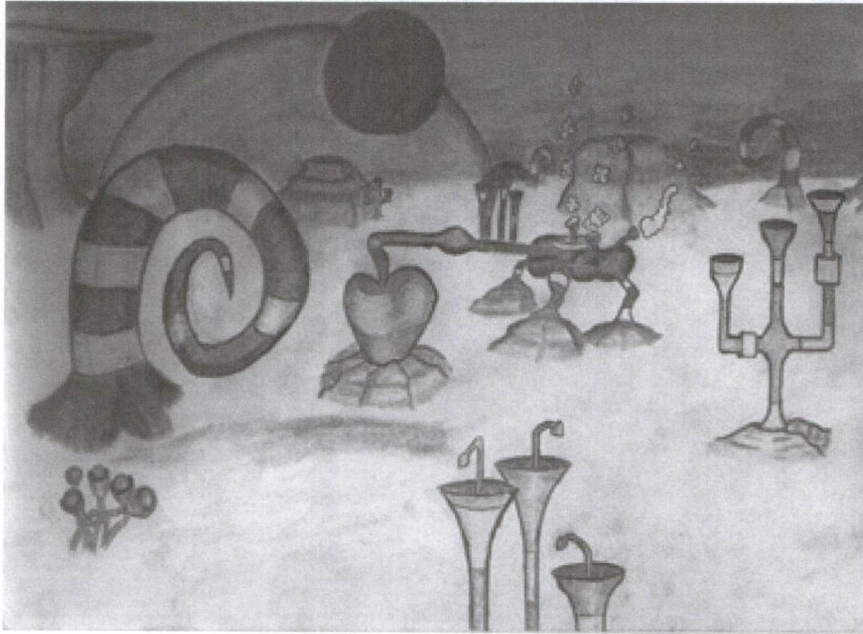
Untitled

KATIE ELKINS



Surreal Background

PAT KIRLIN



Goodbye My Sun

JONATHAN JULIANO

It took seven days for the sun to die
And no words could describe how beyond beautiful it was.
Sherbet shaded the acid wash sky
And I sat on a hill above the world watching it all
The grass felt like straw, and I said "Hold your horses."
I wasn't ready for the world to not exist
So I readjusted the way I was sitting and a cigarette was lit
I took drags as the sun started to say goodbye,
I told him he could rest in my two fingers as I threw up a peace sign
It's better to burn out than to fade away
But the sun is the only thing that does both

Can You Tell Me What It's Like?

GIA DATTILO

I want to die only as much as You want me dead
And words cant describe reasons for these tears I have shed.
Thoughts and actions far hidden behind walls,
But You see them and I pray that You'll forgive all my faults.
You punish and torture in ways oh so kind
Because You know settled so deeply You lie in the back of my mind
Constantly lurking in my every move and every word,
But You never step in even when You see I am hurt.
Every move is a judgment, every action is a test.
So one day I'll wholly deserve the place that I rest
But I need something real to know that You are here;
Something factual and concrete to take away this fear.
Are You real or a legend please just give me a sign
So that I know one day dirt wont be my only confines.
It scares me to death to think there's nothing after this
To know I'll still be able to experience this beauty, is my only wish.
I want to live, and I want to breathe, and I want to be immortal.
But maybe that's childish and selfish and my thoughts are all distorted.
I want to know if You can still breathe the air that I breathe
Please tell me what it's like when it's finally my time to leave.

The McMansions of Bucks County

RAMIN MAJD

SUVs and playground equipment
surround houses with
5 bedrooms
4 baths
3-car garages and
2 people:
a tween girl walking a little dog
and a cold stranger pulling up his hood.

Valentine's Day

MEGAN PALOS

She enthusiastically handed out
a plethora of papers
in "romantic" colors
like pink and red
and chanted amorous phrases
in French
"for inspiration."

Perhaps she was hoping
to stir up some "love"
among us freshmen,
who only knew "love"
as being super-glued
at the hands and being
horribly giggly
and twirling
telephone chords
nervously around our
pudgy, childlike fingers.

I, who, back then,
still had a strong
underlying belief
that all members of the
male species had
cooties,
played along.

It was, after all,
for a grade.

First At Bat

MARK NATALE

July 5th, 1963 - My First Professional at Bat

The year was nineteen sixty-three; the summer after my high school graduation. Most of my friends stayed at home those months after high school, enjoying the last moments a hometown had to offer before life whisked them away. My plan was, well, a bit different.

My baseball season had ended prematurely, an error sending us home a couple of games before our dreams were realized. That unfortunate inning would boil in the souls of many of my teammates, leaving a sour taste in their middle aged mouths decades later. Fortunately for me, the prospect of professional baseball gave me the adventure needed to get away from that game, that team, and that town.

The majority of my friends were finding work around this time (in less desirable fashions than my own). There were a handful going to college, and even a select few playing college ball. But despite my mother's urgings and the advice of most of my family, I put my college experience on hold with the prospect of getting paid to play the game I love. I remember thinking that I only had one shot at this whole ballplayer dream of mine, so I might as well make the most of it. That summer, I packed up a few of my possessions, kissed my teary eyed mother goodbye, took the bus into Philadelphia and jumped on a plane heading to Round Rock Texas, home to the Round Rock Red Hawks of the Pacific League. It was Single A baseball at its finest.

Round Rock Texas was about as far from a major league stadium as you could get, but as soon as I walked into the ballpark I felt the chills of an accomplished dream. I remember standing on the dug out steps, soaking in the wide green landscape under an endless Texas sky. Looking back, the stadium was nothing more than a shoebox with grass, dirt and obnoxious advertisements. But at the time, that park was my very own Coliseum, the type of building where legends were born. I walked onto the field for the first time hoping to make a few memories of my own, but soon learned that would have to wait.

I suited up right away, and occupied the bench even faster. Apparently, my defensive abilities were seen as a liability. For the first time in my career, I could not get in a game. A whole series went by, and I rarely left my spot on the bench. This was new to me, and there were a few innings I was even a bit discouraged. Apparently I didn't read the ball off the bat well enough, a critical problem for an aspiring outfielder. This would take some time to work on; time I wasn't excited to spend. My only saving grace was that everyday at practice I stepped into the batters box with my 32 oz golden ticket into game time.

My bat needed no work, even though the coach would never admit it. My swing was as natural to the game as the bright summer sun and the crisp breeze of a baseball afternoon. I was going to get into a game; it was just a matter of time.

It was the seventh inning, with two outs, and the River Cats at our place for the front side of a double header. On the mound for us was Winston Shacksberry, a lifetime small show player who had already worked seven sloppy innings. Two runs in the top of the seventh made it quite clear he didn't have more in the tank. So with men on second and third and Shacksberry due up, my manager looked down the forgotten side of the bench and called my name. Somewhere along the way I must have grabbed a bat and a helmet, but the next thing I remember is standing in the batters box, waiting on my first professional pitch.

It was a big spot in the game and the crowd was anxious (a double header for the cost of one game, plus bat day, gave us a few thousand in the stands). I was facing Edmund Johanson, another lifetime minor leaguer. To be honest, I don't remember the first pitch he threw to me. I only remember swinging what is to this day the hardest swing of my life. I also remember missing, and badly at that. I missed by so much that a glance at my manager showed his eyes glued to the dugout floor, his head down in frustration.

I stepped out of the box and breathed. My emotions had obviously gotten the best of me, and if I didn't calm down my first at bat wasn't going to be very memorable. I took a second to look at Edmond, his red floppy hair sliding goofily out of his old cap, his bushy mustache covering the scowl of a veteran. I convinced myself that he was no different than any other pitcher I had ever faced, all of which I had believed were inferior ball players to myself.

I stepped back into the batters box a different player than the one that swung at the first pitch, and when Edmond unleashed his curve ball my bat rested gently on my shoulder. His ball curved a bit more than he had hoped, and found itself just about dirt level

on the outside. I heard a few remarks from the dug out and the crowd, complimenting my eye and heckling his pitch. I waved my bat a few times to loosen my nerve tightened arms. The next pitch came, high heat that never became familiar with the strike zone. Again, my bat was comfortable on my number 24 jersey. A few more practice swings and the bat found its usual weightless property in my arms. Edmund adjusted his hat, spit to his left and prepared for the next pitch.

He wound up, and hurled the best breaking ball he could muster. Unfortunately for Edmund, his breaking ball never quite broke that much, and it hung above the plate long enough for my rookie eyes to feast upon its beauty. I cracked that ball with everything I had, threw my bat, and ran to first without even looking past my scampering feet. As I rounded first, I saw the outfielder picking up the ball and preparing to hurl it in my direction. I slid into second off the energy of pure desperation. I crashed into the base pad just a moment before the infielder's glove grazed my leg.

I was safe.

I stood up to the sound of cheers and whipped off my uniform with an air of pure exultation. The score was now 6-4, and we would go on to win the game by a margin of 5 runs.

I remember going 1-9 in my pinch hit appearances following that game; not exactly the statistics of a natural. I still had a lot to learn, and my game still was far away from its major league dream. But throughout the over two decades I've spent in the professional realm of this game, I'll always remember that minor league Texas swing. That swing was an accomplishment, a professional hit, and it was the beginning of a ride I'll cherish forever. The Round Rock Red Hawks may not be much to speak of, and a hit off of Edmund Johanson isn't exactly going to punch a ticket to Cooperstown, but it was a moment that has always meant the world to me. At the time, that sunny July day in Round Rock Texas was my cool October Night in New York; and in many ways, it still is.

Changing Seasons

LUCIAN TUCKER

There's no need to drench your roses in the
Heart of May. Come spring, the rain is more than
Enough. Although, I'd loathe to be a
Spider and have to build a web again.

And in the soul of winters eve, when all
The leaves have died, I'd hate to be a tree—
Exposed. But then again, so proud and tall
They seem. No longer slaves to leaves. So free!

I don't, although I did when young, destroy
The snow. I just watch as the spring takes toll.
One day I saw a killing by a boy.
The snow was but a child. He took its soul.

"The snowflakes! The snowflakes! Go view its death."
The horror I ponder beneath my breath.

³¹
For You
MEGAN PALOS

I never knew what to say to you
Though I had practiced endlessly,
Cursing at my reflection as I repeated
Those two difficult syllables—
“Hello.”

Lilly and the Fish
BYARD BRIDGE



The Science

RETHNA EDDY

Glucose sweet

You wrap your polysaccharides of lies


Until you have me in your covalent bonds

It wasn't so easy to balance our equation

You and I, we come in indefinable quantities

And sometimes, I'm sorry, truly sorry

That love is the most inexact study



Precious

CARA CONOCER

Art

I can laugh now at this idea

It's been bastardized by the likes of you

So many times before

Your interpretation kills me

Since all that I have lived for seems a lie

You have destroyed all beauty

Expression is such a relative term

Lost meaning in the time you wasted

The universe sees and hears and knows God

You do not need to prove this

Take the heart and release its flow

Catch the drippings and appreciate the soul

Step back or we are all doomed

On the verge of automaton dawn

Suitcase Sentinels

JONATHAN JULIANO

While traveling on a train or a bus I like to think of Jack Kerouac and the routes he traveled while “on the road,” the same way he thought of people that traveled the same routes before him. I think of him the way he traveled through Harrisburg and Allentown thinking about Ben Franklin walking the same roads they did. When Kerouac or anyone for that matter hitchhiked during those days, there was an unspoken bond of trust that the hitchhiker made with the driver, and the driver with the tired thumbbed traveler. The hitchhiker trusted that the driver wouldn’t take advantage or kidnap him, and the driver had to trust that the hitchhiker wasn’t dangerous, and wasn’t going to steal the car or rob the driver. The world seems too dangerous to hitchhike anymore. However sometimes that bond of trust that connected Kerouac to the many cars he traveled in, and two people on a bus or a train. Traveling on public transportation still says a lot about life and society as a whole and keeps that bond in tact.

While waiting for your train, there are many temptations for you to indulge in but standing in a narrow line with all your bags (in my current case a laptop, a suitcase, and a backpack with a Sega Genesis in it) is a lot to carry through the line, and a lot to leave unwatched. So here is the procedure that goes down. When you first sit down while waiting for your train you have to make slight eye contact with someone or say a general comment like “nice luggage,” or the broad question, “So where are you heading?” This connection could also be established by an unspoken fashion similarity. A person wearing a Yankees hat is not going to ask a person with a Red Sox hat to watch his luggage. There’s just something about a Red Sox fan you just can’t trust. However if you see someone with a Yankee hat on and you too are wearing said Yankee hat, then you have a bond without vocalizing it. Sure you may share a glance, or wink but like an 80’s hair band ballad; the bond is “more than words.” You don’t necessarily have to like the piece of luggage or care where they are heading but regardless; the connection is established. This person will come in handy when you have to go get your ticket, go to the bathroom, or get something to eat.

This is the person you put in charge of guarding your luggage while you take a leave of absence from it.

It is arbitrary to ask someone to watch over your possessions after making eye contact or having a very brief one sentence conversation. I wouldn't even trust some of my closest friends with personal possessions of mine, but I trust these strangers, these suitcase sentinels? I like to pay it forward in these situations. It makes me feel more comfortable when I leave my luggage for a brief moment. One time a man asked me to watch his luggage while we were waiting for a greyhound bus. I think an unspoken bond was already established however because we were both in the same position, waiting in line for a very late bus, but no matter. I watched over his luggage like a bald eagle perched in a tree looking out for potential egg stealers. He came back after a few minutes and I realized I had a couple extra dollars in my tight traveling budget. I asked him to watch my luggage, and he had an obligated duty to pay me back by watching my luggage. Now he didn't have to respond to my request, but it would have been horrible karma, and a dick thing to do if he didn't.

Traveling shows that we have too much trust in a society, but maybe that's a good thing. With all the "bad news" on the news showing us how "bad" America is, and how violent it is, maybe it's really a good society that we can trust enough to watch luggage so I can get a Snapple or a bag of goldfish (the ultimate transportation food besides trail mix). Maybe these are the gestures that show society for what it is, and the media misleads us by showing events that negatively portray us. Maybe traveling shows that trust among society is still prevalent, and it is what connects us to rail riders and sore thumb wavers of the past.

Once aboard the train, you start to see that this good trustworthy society is divided into two groups of people, not by class or race, or religion, but by the people who put their seat all the way back and the people who don't. The people who don't put their seat back probably do, but are nice and ask the people behind them if it's alright or don't ask and just don't put it back all the way. I fall into this considerate category. The people who put their seat back all the way are for lack of a better, more literary word, assholes. This one guy right before I started typing this had his seat all the way back and kept leaning back, pushing the limits of the seat's lean back capabilities. If he leaned back any further, his hair would have been a grass field for my "boys" to play in (and by boys, I mean testicles). The seat lean backers rule the world by stepping on the considerate people

who don't push their seat back. This particular guy was in a suit and had gray sideburns much longer than they needed to be. He was reading the business section, or about stocks, and then was reading about golf, which is the snobbiest sport known to man other than maybe cricket, and the unofficial sport of pretending the homeless are invisible. So due to his choice of reading material, I assumed he was a white collar criminal and stepped on everyone he had to in order to make it to the top. Furthermore he's got a wife and two kids and he's cheating on his wife with his blonde secretary who knows that if she stops seeing him, she'll be fired, and she can't file a law suit because this guy has enough money to pay off judges. He'll eventually fire her for another secretary not based on her qualifications for the job, but based on her qualifications to wear a short skirt and high heels. Now maybe I have assumed too much, and just falsely judged this pompous snob. But the situation I just laid out for you isn't that far fetched. HE INCONSIDERATELY PUT'S HIS SEAT BACK. There's no telling how far this menace will go to hurt society

My counter attack to his causing of the metal arms of the upright tray to repeatedly hit my knees, was moving my knees and ever so slightly jamming them into his back. I'm not sure if it worked but he did move around a lot trying to figure out why his back hurt. We eventually got to New York and he got off (much like his secretary). And I was finally able to put my tray down and get my computer to type this essay.

These two situations are related because (a) they just happened to me and (b) I would never trust that white collar criminal and adulterer with my luggage, if I had to go buy a Snapple. He would never trust me either. That type would never leave his possessions for a second because they are too precious to him. And he knows if he trusts one of the people lower than him who isn't like Fat Joe, (someone who constantly leans back from my understanding) someone who just takes the blows to the knees when the guy in front of him leans his seat back; he is giving the oppressed upright sitting class of citizens the power they crave for. With that power we can not watch his luggage and just leave it, or throw his briefcase probably containing a blackberry, a Wall Street Journal, Golf Digest, and the How to Get Away with Sexual Harassment for Dummies in the garbage. You should be courteous while traveling on public transportation, and politely make small talk in case you need the listener's help later on. I wonder if Kerouac ever mistrusted someone he got a ride from. I wonder how hitchhikers knew it was safe to get rides from strangers. These are the things you encounter while traveling on public transportation; the secret

society of suitcase sentinels, and hoping someone gets hit by a car while crossing a New York City Street because he puts his seat back too far. Now boarding literary elitists with a bitterness towards the upper class; all aboard.

Sweeping the Kitchen Floor

MEGAN PALOS

I shuddered as I hesitantly
Enjoyed the sound
Of rice grains
Clicking against the dustpan
And realized that I was slowly
Turning into my mother.

Western Scene

PAT KIRLIN



Good Grief

LUCIAN TUCKER

I always thought of hospitals as magical places. Oftentimes, I'll go to John Hopkins feeling ill, and right when I pass through the sliding door entrance, I'll be cured. And so I'll go to Dr. Wong and when he asks, "So why are you here today, Michael?" in his proper, yet difficult-to understand voice, I'll sit there trying to remember what was wrong with me.

"My balls sometimes itch," I believe was what I said last time. I told him that they sometimes itch because, as that trip to the hospital taught me, my balls had the ability to stop itching.

"Are you sexually active?" he asked.

"Naw," I quickly responded.

He gave a suspicious look and I gave him one back as he scribbled some notes. Before I left, I learned I had some sort of fungus, but for thirty minutes or so, my balls felt great.

As I sat beside my man's deathbed, that's what was running through my head—my racist, Asian doctor. I acknowledge these types of things in people who don't acknowledge it in them. I keep my mouth shut, though, letting them live their life while I live mine.

This applies to all the people in my neighborhood, including my close friends Fiddy and Tay. I'd been waiting for them to come for half an hour when an attractive nurse walked into check on him. She seemed to be doing everything she could to avoid eye contact with me—looking at a machine, looking at the bed, bending over to look at another machine, then looking at the bed again. I was eye-balling her hard, imagining what she might look like without her white uniform, when I noticed Fiddy and Tay at the door eye-balling her, too.

She had a light- chocolate complexion and long, defined eyelashes darkened with

mascara. I could tell she was wearing mascara because there was a faint black trail that ran down her left cheek. I noticed then the unhappiness that surrounded her. I dreamt up the reason for this: she'd just gotten off the phone with her boyfriend who'd just passed her up for lunch. She was on her period, so she cried uncontrollably. Women get that way when they're on their period.

"She look like she ain't doin' shit," Fiddy said in a loud whisper.

Tay chuckled.

She looked back at them with an eye only a woman on her period could give.

"Yo, chill," I said calmly.

I didn't see her reaction, but I imagined she smiled for a second, and in that second, felt happy. She quietly walked out of the room, sliding between the two black men wearing fitted hats, baggy jeans, and white tees.

"Wsup," I said to Fiddy and Tay as I nodded.

We called this "the greeting"—saying "what's up" while nodding. Almost simultaneously, Tay and Fiddy gave me the greeting back as they walked into the room. Tay glanced over the occupied bed and noticed a chair. Fiddy saw a chair behind him and pulled it up. When everyone sat, I noticed we made a triangle over the bed; I was at the bottom and Fiddy and Tay were on the sides.

"What took y'all so long?"

"We was watchin' SportsCenter."

Tay added to Fiddy's comment: "They was talking about Michael Vick and that dog stuff."

"I don't get it," I responded. "Why are they making a big deal about dog fighting? There are people all over the world that kill animals for recreation—just for the fuck of it—and people wanna get on Vick for doin' it. How is it legal to use a gun, shoot an animal, and take it home to hang on a wall, and illegal to make two dogs fight?"

"So its not cool to kill animals?" Tay asked.

"I dunno," I replied.

Fiddy hesitatingly joined in, saying animals were here for us to eat and that we shouldn't kill animals for the fuck of it.

I thought on this while Fiddy and Tay chatted about the Falcons chances of winning half their games this season. If an animal's only purpose was to be eaten by us,

then why don't we eat dogs? Why do we ride horses and not eat them? Is it only okay to kill an animal when they are going to be eaten afterwards?

Suddenly I noticed the beeping sounds coming from the machine beside the bed. I began to stare at it, and this made Fiddy and Tay look as well.

"I forgot what is even wrong with him." I became somewhat angry with myself when I realized this.

"I thought he was your man," Fiddy said mockingly.

"You were cool with him, too! And you took all this fuckin' time to come because of fuckin' SportsCenter."

We began to go back and forth as if it was the other's fault for what had happened to my man—our man.

"Fuck it. It doesn't matter who was closer to him. We all made the effort to come here so he must mean somethin' to each of us. We should just be happy that he's going to a better place."

"True. He was going through a lot of shit. But now, he just... chillin'," said Fiddy. Finally, we were all on the same page.

"Ya'll ever... think about life after death? Not the Biggie album, but, like, what happens after a dude gets shot."

Of course we thought about death. It's all around us. One time my little brother and I were walking to Shop Rite and "blam," this dude collapsed right in front of us. We flinched at the "pow," but we didn't look around. We didn't look where the shot came from or at the body on the ground. We looked down just enough to avoid stepping in blood and brains.

What could we do? If we would have called the police and described the shooter, everyone would find out and we'd be called snitches. Nobody likes a snitch. It's best to look straight and keep walking—act like it never happen.

After that, I decided, fuck guns. I didn't want to be the dude leakin' on the ground or the dude running from the scene. But still, I can't separate myself from it. People still look at me as if I'm one of "them" because I wear baggy pants and white tees. That's not me.

"Sometimes I think that when you die, you just lay in the dark not moving," Fiddy thought out loud. "Like you're in a deep sleep but you know you're asleep."

"Damn. That sounds fucked up." Tay's statement mirrored my thoughts as well,

but then I thought more on it.

"What if death is a long sleep, but you get to dream and the dream last forever? That way, heaven can be whatever you think it is, and people who did bad all their lives and thought they would go to hell, do."

"I think heaven is all white and full of naked women, and you can smoke and drink as much as you want and not have to worry about getting sick," Tay replied.

"Then, when you peace out, that could be the case," I responded. "And I guess people who don't believe in heaven or hell..."

"They just lay in blackness," Fiddy finished.

It was at that exact moment a cough came from the bed. The cough was followed by another "beep" from the machine.

"What if he didn't believe in God?" I thought to myself with my head down as Fiddy and Tay slowly slipped back into their conversation of football.

I normally don't pray, but as Fiddy and Tay began to argue about the skill of the Falcons defensive backs, I suddenly I felt compelled to.

"I know I don't normally pray, but God, please watch over him."

I felt a tear begin to fall from my eyelashes.

"And, God, please, if he does not believe in you, help him believe. I just want him to be happy—he's gone through so much."

When I opened my eyes, the tear that was trapped between my eyelashes broke free. I wiped it away.

Overwhelmed with an uncomfortable feeling, I took one more look at my man and, without warning, walked out. Fiddy and Tay quickly followed.

Despite my man's state, I was actually pretty happy.

As we walked towards the hospital's exit I noticed the nurse from earlier. I excused myself from Tay and Fiddy and walked over to her with the intent of getting her number. I learned that her name was Isabella and she was 22 and single. I told her I noticed her mascara running earlier and was wondering if she was sad.

"I'm going to miss Yolanda Adams's concert next weekend because I have to work."

I looked at her waiting for her to continue—there had to have been more to the story than that. She fixed her lips to say more.

"And I'm on my period."

The Elegy to Friends

CARA CONOCER

I lament the death of friends
That are not yet gone
Figments of their ideal selves
Are what they have become
Hypocritical in every way
I stand away alienated

I was once in the group
Making promises and sharing my dreams
Late nights and laughter were common
Somehow it all changed
They include only themselves
Being young and living for the moment
In ways I choose not to partake

Idolatry is no longer the way
Disappointment and betrayal are left
They are but strangers and enemies

To the faith and innocence I gave to them

I lost myself to please them

It hurt my soul to be this way

I can no longer stand to see a stranger

Every time I am surrounded by "friends"

If they truly cared

It would not matter which hat I wear

Smothered in my dreams within dreams

Ignored in the next layer

I have nothing else to give

Because they just take

I just want to walk away

All I hear are their voices

Pleading with me

Wondering why I feel so different

I cannot turn away from my mind and heart

Just to act like a member of this society

I take a breath and let it escape

As I wish to do someday

I nod and walk their way


Only out of necessity

Not out of love.

Untitled

RETHNA EDDY

Let's dance in the rain
Feeling the raindrops on our
Eyelids
Eyelashes
Lips
Hair
And stop dancing when
Nothing in this world matters
Our hearts stop breaking,
Tears are nothing more then allergic reactions
And we are a simple equation.
We won't have to drown our troubles in alcohol
And the smiles around me become real.
Let's stop when I have you and you have me
And my life is not a puzzle without the missing pieces anymore
Let's dance in that acidic rain
Letting it burn away our imperfections
Until we are all perfect people with perfect lives
Let's forget our regrets and stop wondering when it all becomes
Worth it once more
Truth is
Honestly
The rain is the one thing that makes me forget who I really am
And is only a temporary cover for what I call happiness
Let's strum our guitars and pretend to be cool
While we live for something we can't grasp
Let's let the music suffocate us all and dance until nothing and no one matters
Except you and me



Hunting

LAUREN BALLIET

December fourth, and Butch was already moving about the house in the half-light of early morning. The walls shook in tandem with the thud of his thick boots as he crossed from room to room, double-checking the mental list he had culminated over the past fifty years: licenses, tags, calibers, scents. Satisfied for the moment, he came to rest in the kitchen, leaning over the kitchen sink and looking out the window as he waited for his toast to pop up. A light snow, visible as streaks of blue on top of the brown-black leaves in his backyard, had fallen overnight. Almost instinctively, he looked for tracks.

It was the last week of deer season, and Butch already had his gun leaning against the battered old armchair in the living room, ready to be loaded into the back of his truck. His fluorescent orange vest and cap rested on the seat of the chair. His hunting license dangled limply from the back of the cap. Laddie, his black lab, lay sprawled out on the rug. Butch had picked him up from the pound six years ago during his short-lived interest in ducks, but the dog had proved too stupid to retrieve anything but sticks and rocks from local creeks. Lad enjoyed a shiftless life of eating table scraps and suffering the occasional small child, free of any purpose except to cajole treats and caresses from humans. He wouldn't get his daily ride until later in the afternoon.

Butch rubbed his belly as he scanned the yard, squinting through his thick glasses. He had been dressed in his camouflage jacket and pants since he had awoken; he was anxious, yes, but the cold Pennsylvania mornings this time of year demanded several layers of warm clothing. His youngest grandchild had once seen him in his hunting camouflage and told him he resembled a big old tree. He had pulled her up onto his knee, Santa-like, and tickled her as she giggled at her big granpop. She was his favorite out of the five grandkids.

The toaster popped, and Butch buttered the two slices. He replaced the butter in the fridge and stood by the sink again as he chewed loudly, crunching down as he bit off each piece of toast. He had left the bedroom door open, and his wife Barbara's snoring

wafted down the hall. He smacked his lips together after he finished, and his wife sucked in air, a loud, explosive, apneatic snort. She was fine – she always did that. After a moment of silence, she began snoring again, and within ten minutes she would crescendo to that death rattle again.

In the dim light he put on the orange vest and cap and loaded his equipment into the back of his pickup truck with gloved hands, breathing in the cold and exhaling mist. The cabin of the truck was cold and the steering wheel was freezing, and though he wouldn't be driving long he turned the heat on full blast. He was getting old. He had retired from the manufacturing company two years ago, but after a short while he had begun creating projects in the garage to keep himself occupied, sometimes spending hours at a time building birdhouses or lawn ornaments. After years of carpentry and early mornings, he couldn't break – didn't want to break – the habit of constant movement. He was desperately afraid of the atrophy his muscles would inevitably experience, the slowness of mind that begins with the slowness of body, even though he had been breathing heavily for years now when he performed moderate labor. After a lifetime of hard work and desire of freedom, he now found himself in desperate need of the activity.

He had enjoyed deer hunting since his kids were young, and though he considered it only an occasional hobby, it got him out once in a while. He would hunt on Fred's property, a stretch of forested land at the base of the mountain. Fred had mounted a tree stand years ago in the middle of the property, where Butch intended to stake out this morning. He would come back around noon if the cold didn't get to him sooner. Barbara would be at the church by then, preparing for a basket social or some other function.

He parked the truck at the end of the dirt road leading to the property and began trudging through the leaves to the tree stand. It was just after dawn, and the forest was still except for him, his walking like a deafening crunching, loud enough to wake the dead. He wiped his glasses and peered out through the old lenses, trying to remember the way from his last visit a year ago. Out here the snow had fallen as well, descended among the bare finger-like branches onto a bed of dead leaves below in the dead of night. The butt of his rifle was nestled in the crook of his arm, like a lamb and shepherd or those pictures of the moon interlocked with the sun. He had tried out archery once but didn't like it – besides, the gun had been his father's hunting rifle. His father had taken many a worthy creature with the rifle, and when he died and it was passed on to his eldest. Butch, however, hadn't

had nearly as much luck over the years with it. He could only recall a handful of successful hunts with the rifle, which emerged from behind its glass case maybe twice a year.

Thirty years ago he nabbed a twelve-pointer, and Barbara had thrown a fit over the idea of getting it mounted. "I don't want any dead buck's stuffed head staring at me every time I'm watching television," she had said. "I don't even like having the guns around the house, with the kids running around all over the place. Who knows when they'll get into the cabinet?" She had bothered him for years, especially now that his sight was deteriorating even faster than before, and they had come to an agreement that he would sell his guns after this hunting season, though they had always been locked up and out of her sight. Better to keep her happy than endure the nagging.

With his deadline in sight, he had gone out several times since the season started, trying to catch a buck the way students cram for tests. No matter the size, he would mount it and keep it in his workshop as a reminder of his moments of unadulterated solitude, out in the woods away from the nagging, snoring, groaning, and the other irksome little noises she made over the years.

By the time Butch reached the tree stand, he was taking in long, audible breaths. His toes were already beginning to feel numb. The sky had turned from a neutral tone to a grayish white that mirrored the snow on the ground. He climbed the wooden ladder and positioned himself on the platform, setting the gun across his lap. With a half-cozy, half-tired sigh, he inspected the forest. He always hunted alone. The peace and solitude out in the woods was his favorite part of hunting, perhaps the only part of hunting he truly enjoyed. As he sat there, he developed a pattern: taking a quick sweep over his field of vision, then starting from the top corner and slowly, almost painstakingly, scrutinizing every bit of forest, searching in between groves of trees. He made sure to examine the scant few leaves that still clung to low branches. The pattern soon became automatic.

Perhaps it was the eerie silence of early morning, but Butch felt a sudden void within himself, above the pit of his stomach. It was a strange feeling, one that he couldn't quite explain away as one of the effects of time that seemed to pop up unexpectedly from time to time in the past ten years. No, he had felt this several months ago, late at night as he measured planks of wood and tried to ignore Barbara's wheezes, audible even from the garage. He had felt a wave of disgust, directed at her. Sometimes she was just too much, and he felt no choice but to hide in the garage to avoid strangling her. That's when he had felt

the void, which he had assumed was indigestion from the spiced beans at supper.

Earlier that week she had told him Ellen, their oldest, had called from Chicago. She mentioned it in passing, as if it was something that happened every week or so.

"Why didn't you tell me when she called?" Butch had asked, muting the evening news.

"Well, you were out in the garage." She rustled her magazine. "Didn't wanna bother you. I'm thinking of making potatoes and chicken tomorrow, but there's also some steak in there that's good still. Think we should finish it first? Hah?"

"Whatever you want, hon," and Fox News resumed commentary on housing costs.

Ellen didn't talk much to him, even before she moved out to Chicago with her family. Butch wasn't very fond of her husband, who frequently shuttled Ellen and the two kids off on trips to Barbados and Czechoslovakia or whatever. They were financially successful enough to afford the trips, but Butch thought they were spoiling themselves too much. Life wasn't all fun and games and vacations and condos. The kids might end up spoiled. Maybe that was how kids were raised out in Chicago nowadays.

Though Barbara never mentioned it, Butch knew her relations with Ellen were strained as well. Several times when she had called, after the awkward "hello dad" and "hi Ellen, how are the kids" and "oh, they're kids, see you" was over and he had retired to his workshop in the garage, he had heard Barbara shouting into the phone, then sobbing, which would fade as she went to the bedroom and shut the door. Butch, distracted by the yelling, would then inexorably hit a nail the wrong way, splinter the wood, sigh, and start over with a fresh new piece.

As he watched beyond the trees for movement, he began wondering what could have created the void. He was mostly satisfied with his life, except for the knowledge in the back of his mind that he was coming closer to his end with each black hair that finally turned gray. He had worked hard during his youthful days, and he was now reaping his rewards. He had provided for his family – a family, though, that seemed ungrateful, but he had accepted it. Maybe the void was the knowledge that he was approaching the rest of his life, a premonition of his life without the wooded escape in late fall, a life of day after day spanning on until he fell asleep forever. He needed that deer badly, that one last victory, memorialized by the taxidermist.

The other daughter, Laura, at least she stayed close to home. She had no husband at the moment, so the three kids were often at Granmom and Granpop's place while Laura worked and ran errands. Her two boys were teenagers and more interested in karate and cars than carpentry and grandparents, but her little daughter Diana was too young to have anything but complete admiration for her stout grandfather. His best times with Diana would be when his wife was out at choir practice or shopping with Laura, and the boys would be out with their friends – then he could play with Diana, just the two of them alone. He took her fishing once in the summer, and she caught a rainbow trout. Her eyes glittered like the body of the slick trout, and she watched in awe as Butch adeptly slipped the hook from the fish's mouth and handed it to Diana.

"Now throw it back into the creek, hon. He's gotta go home."

"Granpop, can't we keep it? We can get a fish bowl for it." The fish was motionless in her tiny hands, and her eyes were still glimmering.

Butch laughed. "I wish we could, but I'm not sure your mom would like it very much."

"We could keep it at your place!" And a grin washed across her face.

"But you don't want Granmom mistaking it for dinner, right? She might cook it."

"You wouldn't eat my fish, would you?" Now her eyes were wide with shock.

Butch couldn't help laughing again.

"No, sweetie, I wouldn't. He's happier here in the creek, though. Wouldn't you be happier at home with Mom than being held in a bubble at the bottom of a lake?"

Diana had thrown back the fish eventually and used those big child eyes to seduce him into an ice cream cone at the end of their fishing trip. Ellen or Laura or Barbara never seemed interested in going fishing with him, or helping him in his workshop, and he wasn't interested in basket socials or Barbados, and carnivals and movies and Judge Wapner bored him. By the time he retired, it had well been established that they each had their separate amusements: the women went out with each other and the kids, and he stayed at home working on his projects.

As Butch began thinking of his pattern for moose lawn decorations, he heard rustling from the woods in front of him. He immediately began searching, squinting through his glasses to spot the source. A moving tan-colored patch appeared off to his right, though it was a tiny splotch of color. Butch focused his eyes on the tan, which disappeared

and reappeared like a Cheshire cat. He waited for a better view, but the form kept darting behind trees. It seemed like hours until it came into a clearing.

There, before him in the distance, was the biggest buck he had ever seen in his life. Its chest was thick with sinew, and it walked majestically among the barren trees, a shining beacon of life. The coat was flawless, a rich tan like light chocolate tapering to the tail into a soft, flickering fluff of white. Its antlers were enormous ivory sculptures that rose above its head like a crown. It wore it well as it walked with utmost dignity through its domain.

The creature stood straight in Butch's view, and he raised his rifle. The buck turned his head in the direction of the noise, and its eyes seemed to lock right onto Butch's eyes. Its ears perked, and it stood still, perfect antlers gleaming in the morning light. Even its tail was immobile. Butch pulled the trigger, and the shot echoed throughout the forest. He scrambled down from the tree stand and ran in the direction of the perfect buck, hoping desperately that he had not imagined it. His heart pounded in his chest as he reached the spot where it once stood. A mass of blood stained the snow and trailed off in thick dollops, which Butch followed. He was out of breath, but he followed as fast as he could. After an eternity of hoping to God it wouldn't get away, he spotted the deer, which was lying on the ground.

It was a doe. His glasses, or his imagination, must have fooled him. The thing kicked and struggled, wheezing with its last breaths and attempting to call for help. Its black eyes wandered lazily, finally finding Butch standing over her, catching his breath. She wheezed again, her chest heaving painfully. Blood dripped from her mouth onto the snow as it melted around her, turning into a red mass encompassing her. Her eyes were fixed on Butch as she wheezed again. He stood motionless and watched, transfixed by the dying doe, eyes locked on hers as well as if hypnotized. After she breathed her last and her body had become as still as the woods surrounding them, as the blood pooled around her body and dried on her fur, their eyes remained locked, regarding each other in the deathly silence of the woods.


Staccato Love

LUCIAN TUCKER

It's body feels so smooth! The smell creates
A taste. The waist is reminiscent of
a woman's silhouette. The curves, entice.

I pick it up and pluck a string. The moan
is music to my ears. It's soft—in tune.

It's melody lacks jealousy. In time,
Sadly, it fades. The strap comes off. Guitar,
So long. For one day we'll meet again.



Role Model

SEAN DEAN

Lost children, not old enough to be called adults, scatter these streets like they belong in the middle of a forest. Not knowing which way is north and which way is east they wander trying to listen their way out. Why do so many of them turn to something artificial when they're searching for something real? I swear I'm not one of these kids.

I wrote that in my journal. I love writing in my journal. It's the only place I am completely honest with myself. I don't write enough though. I never think I am that good but other people tell me I am when I let them read some stuff. That excerpt up above wasn't that good, but it got my point across I hope. People think it is such a hard process to write. For me I just write and it comes out, and sometimes I like it and sometimes I don't. When I am drunk or after getting high I really like to write. I think in rhyme scheme while high and a poem excretes out of my head and onto the page. I don't know how serious I am about writing though. If you asked me if I am going to be famous one day and publish a book, I'd say sure. If I'm shooting for the stars why not attempt to take down a whole galaxy. I like to write about stuff around me. I observe everything as possible inspiration. Be careful if you're around me because you might end up in a story. I know drugs are not any kind of answer they are only temporary, and they only artificially inspire me. But so many famous writers did so many different drugs though. Jim Morrison did peyote until he overdosed on a drug cocktail. LSD was Hunter Thompson's drug of choice until he blew his brains out, no relations to the drug and blowing his brains out but it sure couldn't have helped. Hemmingway and Poe loved alcohol. Today marijuana was the drug of choice for my brother, his girlfriend and I.

I watched my brother try to impress his girlfriend while we were high in the playroom today. It wasn't hard for him to do. My brother is a legend in this town. He is the type of person everyone wants at their parties. Everyone loves him and has an anecdote about him and believe me I've heard them all; many times. I don't know how but he seems to be very charming to other people. For instance he was a class clown in high school but

he was one of those class clowns that even though snooty old teachers hated, the majority of teachers were young and cool enough to like my brother and look out for him. I think they saw something in him, some kind of potential. He has this presence where he could go into a bar of strangers and by the end of the night have everybody asking the person next to him, "who was that."

When I was in elementary school, Joey left for the middle school. When I went to the middle school, Joey went to the high school, and when I was I was a freshman in high school, he was a freshman in college. I think this is in part to what deterred us from being close. I am just starting to feel close to him when he is home from college like now for instance, but then he goes back and I never talk to him on the phone. When he did live at home he was one of those people that had to go out every night. I think he wasn't at home for a reason. He was avoiding problems like he was avoiding making eye contact with Mom when he came home high or drunk. On the rare occasion he didn't go out and stayed home watching TV he would be in a terrible mood. For some reason or another we'd end up fighting on those nights. He was bigger than me and four years older so he usually won the fight, but one time we argued over watching television and somehow it ended up with me hitting Joey in the head with the remote, holding it like a knife and I felt proud like an underdog team in a championship game that no one put money on.

After smoking my eyes were redder than Delicious apples dangling from trees in autumn; they were as bitter too. This was good weed. Joey brought it from New Hampshire where his school is. I was not sure if it was the weed that made my eyes red, or rubbing my eyes after they got really dry that made them red. I guess it's one of those chicken and egg questions that I will never know the answer to. Anyways I was out of it, lost in my own thoughts. I sat in my rocking chair while my brother and his girlfriend sat on the raggedy striped couch with their feet on the coffee table. Something Mom always told us not to do.

We were smoking bowls out of my blue bubbler its surname was Commander and Chief because when you "chief" weed, it has absolute power over your lungs, throat, and mind. It was real harsh and everyone always coughs a lot but because it uses water, we got so much more fucked up. Impressed by the nice bowl I bought, and the successful hiding spot where I keep it hidden from Mom, Joey said, "You're so much cooler now that you smoke and drink." I grinned at the compliment, thought about what he said over again, and

then stored it in the back of my brain.

It was a rainy remote control summer day and there was nothing to do. The falling water hit the ground and kept tempo like a jazz drummer. Mom was at work and the rain was coming down so hard, she wouldn't have liked if I drove anywhere. The humidity outside was thick but not unbearable. The atmosphere seemed to be as sticky as the green nugget was while breaking it up.

We stood in the lousy summer weather on our front porch covered by the roof that overhangs. Our front porch is the perfect spot for smoking. We can see any car coming up the long driveway and have at least thirty seconds to hide any paraphernalia, and wave any smoke out of the air before the car even comes close to seeing us. Teamwork is very important when you're under this David Bowie like pressure. The handoff of the pipe has to be in the hands of the other person and cannot be fumbled. The hiding of it and the weed must be quick and the hiding spot must be veiled again. Most importantly I can't forget to put drops of Visine into my eyes; everything comes into play when a car comes up our windy gravel driveway. The road is narrow and the potholes are the size of craters. In fact Aliens on the moon have created myths and folktales about Earth based on the different shapes the craters on my driveway make. The Earth craters grab on to the tires trying to trip up the car, and gives an extra few seconds which is why I never want to fill them with stone when Mom asks me too.

I zoomed my eyes out from the woods and the driveway and looked at the foreground in front of me; the front yard where at one time footballs sloppily spiraled through the summer air, and Nerf guns helped us pretend we were at war. We normally had three Nerf guns. The first was the shotgun that looked like the gun Schwarzenegger had while on the motorcycle in Terminator 2 only it shot darts with suction cups. There was the Rambo like bow and arrow that shot foam arrows, and there was the homoerotic titled Ballzooka that looked like a machine gun from black and white gangster movies. We would always play these games with our neighbor Carter. Carter came from ex hippie parents. They were vegetarians, and the father had a David Crosby looking mustache. A mustache to be proud of, he would always say. The ex hippie used to be friends with Dad when he was still alive. They always talked about gardening. Carter's dad gardened because there was some spiritual connection between him and the earth or some hippie crap like that. My dad gardened but I have no idea why. I think it was relaxing for him. He always planted cherry

tomatoes, zucchini, basil, and I have no idea what else. I was young at the time.

I climbed out of the flashback with both hands and looked over at the fenced area that was Dad's garden. The fence is still around it. It's full of yellow crab grass and dandelions with blonde afros. The deer don't even come anymore because they know there is no longer food in there for them. They seemed to stop coming the day after he died. I don't know how they knew but deer are smart. They used to always eat his plants no matter what techniques he tried to keep them out, fox urine, soap, a higher fence, they always found a way to get into the garden.

"Alex what are the important lessons of life?"

I get yanked out of the past. "What?"

"I said, what are the most important lessons you will need to know?"

"Joe don't do this now."

"Alex!"

"Fine" I took the lighter and my bowl and inhaled the smoke, held it for a few seconds so it could go deep into the caverns of my pink lungs, and then exhaled.

"When you buy beer always drink quality over quantity, and always buy bottles over cans."

"And?"

"Wear a condom?" I said with shrugged shoulders. I laughed at my own joke and Joey and his girlfriend smirked a little. Joey's girlfriend said we laughed the same, and looked the same when we smiled. We got this all the time but I never saw our resemblance. People say we have the same chocolate brown eyes and the same nose.

"No Alex this is serious, the last rule is when you're smoking never use a white lighter. The myth about using a white lighter being bad luck is true. I had one on me myself when I got arrested."

I passed the colored lighter and the bowl to Joe's girlfriend, and I faded back to better times.

While my dad had talked to Carter's dad about fertilizer and whatnot, us kids would do things kids did in the 1990's. Besides Nerf wars we pissed off Historians worldwide by mixing centuries as we built castles and pirate ships out of Legos and made them fight each other. We would separate the Lego pirates' legs from their body and put the sword in between the part where the legs and the torso connected to show a dead soldier.

And then as it was Joey and Carter's manifest destiny, they would travel to my room to play with the old western Playmobile village I had complete with working train. I think it was in my room because it meant the two older kids had to interact with me in order to have shootouts at high noon with the sheriff and the bandit, or pick up passengers at the train station. Playing with Joey and our neighbor built my hopes up and I felt like one of them momentarily. After playing at our house they would then go to Carter's down the street and the eight year old me not understanding why they wouldn't want to hang out with somebody's younger brother, would sob my eyes out as I watched through a window; the riding of two bikes down the driveway and out of sight.

My brother, his girlfriend, and I walked into the house to watch a movie. Our footsteps were different notes playing over the rain's tempo. The grey sky gloomed and is the type of sky that could depress the world, but our heads were floating. There are three categories of movies to watch while high. 1) A comedy. This could range anywhere from a satirical and smart film like a good Woody Allen movie or a good Kevin Smith movie, to an utterly stupid movie but one that is hysterical i.e. something with Will Ferrell. 2) An unintentional comedy. This is a movie that tries so hard to be serious but the acting and overall movie is so terrible that it is hysterically funny. It is impossible not to laugh at these movies (any movie from the 1980s is perfect for this.) And 3) a movie that is smart and makes you think and is not called a movie but a film (just turn on the Independent Movies channel).

My dad didn't know how to deal with tears. Especially when my brother and Carter would do this a few times a week; hang out at home, play with me, get my hopes up, and then leave while I cried. He would yell at me frustratingly saying only girls cry. If I really messed up, and I don't even know how an eight year old could mess up badly, but if I did, he'd hit me. He wasn't abusive just old school. His dad hit him and his dad before that, and I guess I'll hit my kid. I don't want to but it's in my genes. My day without Joey and Carter would then transform back to the monotony of watching boring baseball games, and no one to play with. All those toys I had were only fun with at least two people. A lot of the time my Dad would end up playing with me. He always had to control the train though. I was never allowed to when he was around. He said I was too young and I would break it, but I was still happy he was playing with me. Joey let me conduct the train all the time though, and Dad never knew.

Back in reality I missed most of the conversation Joey had with the 5'5 brown haired girl with splattered freckles and green eyes. I only caught the end which was Joey saying, "I've been smoking every day since high school. I don't even call it getting high anymore, I call it getting normal," his girlfriend thought this was hilarious, and I only half smiled because he was only half joking.

Dad died when I was ten, Joey was fourteen, and my mom was, well I have no idea how old she was. I don't remember the funeral. I remember getting dressed up, but I don't remember seeing him in the casket. I remember being in a limousine. But I don't remember seeing him get buried. It was a tough time to say the least. Joey started high school and started to do whatever he wanted. He was drunk off of the power he felt being the man of the house but didn't take any of the responsibility, and then he was just drunk, and then he was drunk and high.

I think it was tough for Joey to go through those adolescent years not because he needed a loving caring male role model, but because he got into trouble a lot and needed a good smack to the back of the head with my dad's heavy ring on his finger. Dad would have beaten him back onto the right path. Mom tried her best to smack us if she really had to, but there was no father to teach Joey about drugs and drinking and sex and everything else high school kids do for the first time. He gave my mom a lot of trouble especially when Joey got arrested for drugs and drug paraphernalia. They wanted to keep that from me by only fighting after my bedtime. But they were both so stressed out and awkward during the day, it didn't take a brain surgeon to figure out what was going on. I always pretended to fall asleep after Mom tucked me in but then I stayed up and listen to the fights later on in the night. My mom was always crying during these series of fights. She took the arrest so hard because she thought it was her fault, like she failed Joe instead of the other way around. My brother didn't cry but yelled in a choked up voice. Other than the arrest I think Joey turned out OK, and what my mom doesn't know is that he does many other drugs now, none too dangerous or serious, but a small laundry list of them. And well I guess they could be dangerous, but anything can be dangerous.

I was different after Dad died. A boy needs a father and I had no one. I had a hard time getting over the fact that I wouldn't see Dad tomorrow, or the next day. It seems like I cried forever. Like if a faucet is left on and it floods the house. My eyes were left running and flooded my heart, and there was no room for anything else but sadness. My

mom started taking me out of the house more to get my mind off of it. She hugged me like a boa constrictor while I lay on my bed crying. And that's when I started to keep a journal, and not let things bottle up. That's what the grief counselor told me to do. I didn't have to show it to anyone unless I wanted to but she said I had to write in it every day. If it wasn't for writing and my mom, I don't know where I would be right now. Long story short, I think I turned out ok up until this point.

I am sitting here with my brother now. I was brought out of my daydream and back into a hazy reality, back to the movie that I am so lost in already because I can't even find my way out of my own head. I look at Joey and see him talking to his girlfriend.

"Look at that painting. Look how professional it is. I painted that." His voice echoed with enthusiasm.

For the record he painted it when he was really into his Jackson Pollack and drugs phase which pretty much meant his painting looked like a clown blew his nose on a canvas. Every color possible just splattered onto it. I don't know much about Pollack but I feel like his paintings had meaning and significance. Joey's just looked like colors running and dripping together. I had to make a painting for seventh grade, it sucks and I don't like looking at it but it's on the shelf under Joey's. Joey got the top shelf. Joey got more creative as he did more drugs while in high school. He read beat poets, painted, wrote poetry, and joined the school's newspaper, but looking back, I just think his clubs were a cover for doing drugs after school with his friends. He did attempt to be artistic but I'm not sure if it was really him. He just liked the drugs that went with the culture.

"See that bowl?" he said to his girlfriend. "I gave that to Mom for Mother's Day. Remember Alex. I used to be great with a pottery wheel."

"Yeah it's sad that the only class you took seriously in high school was Pottery."

Joey gave me a look of death after that comment but I'll give him credit for the bowl. It looks like it belongs in an upscale trendy store where they would overprice the bowl to rich moms and vintage teenagers. It is tan and it has a wide lip around it with black which drips down the outside like spider legs. His grin takes pride in the fact that he signed the work on the bottom of the bowl with his almost illegible handwriting just in case no one believes he made it. Joey goes over and picks up the bowl to show his girlfriend up close. He talks about his technique while on the pottery wheel. The passion in his voice is a cemetery for dead potential. I can see vultures waiting to pick its bones. The epitaph on the

stone reads I used to be great with a pottery wheel. I suddenly began to question why I still wrote every day and what I am trying to accomplish. I look over my shoulder. Vultures are waiting to perch and feed off of my failure. They're watching from afar; waiting for me to lose confidence and hope.

I sat in the rocking chair thinking about how I sat in the same spot on the couch and talked about writing with girlfriends. Talking about that stuff always leads to getting laid on the couch. I walk into the kitchen to get a drink after realizing nobody's watching the movie. I came back and Joey and his girlfriend went out somewhere; probably to go get laid because the girl with green eyes ate up every word he said today. Joe never says bye. One minute he's there then I will go to the bathroom and he'll be gone. I went over to the window and watch the car leave the driveway. I am seventeen years old and I am still a little boy. When will the situation be different? It's not a bike but a car now, and the toys now have carbs on them and are used to inhale false happiness, and answers to dreams I want to be real.

I could have turned out differently and had an easier time if he took over and became Dad like some oedipal story minus the incest. I needed a father and Joey merely stayed a son Dad was survived by. He never rose to the occasion. I fear I am going to be just like him when I grow up. The cemetery already has a plot ready, waiting for my passion to die.

Why do I go through something so artificial looking for something real? Maybe weed isn't artificial because it's from nature. Maybe smoking is a smaller problem that leads to a bigger one. Joey is one of these lost wanderers walking through the metaphorical forest trying to remember if moss really does grow on the north of things. I can see him trying to find his way but the forest is so thick he can't see out. I don't think he will ever find the course. I will listen, smell, and taste my way out. I refuse to get lost; But nobody ever thinks they are lost; until they are entirely.

Seduction

MEGAN PALOS

I watched, hoping to score some tips as she twirled her tresses around her long index finger, giggling as she eyed her prey. He was a tall young man with cinnamon hair and though he wore his baggy varsity jacket, anyone could tell that behind it was a firm, muscular physique. He turned his head and I knew that the romantic pursuit had begun.

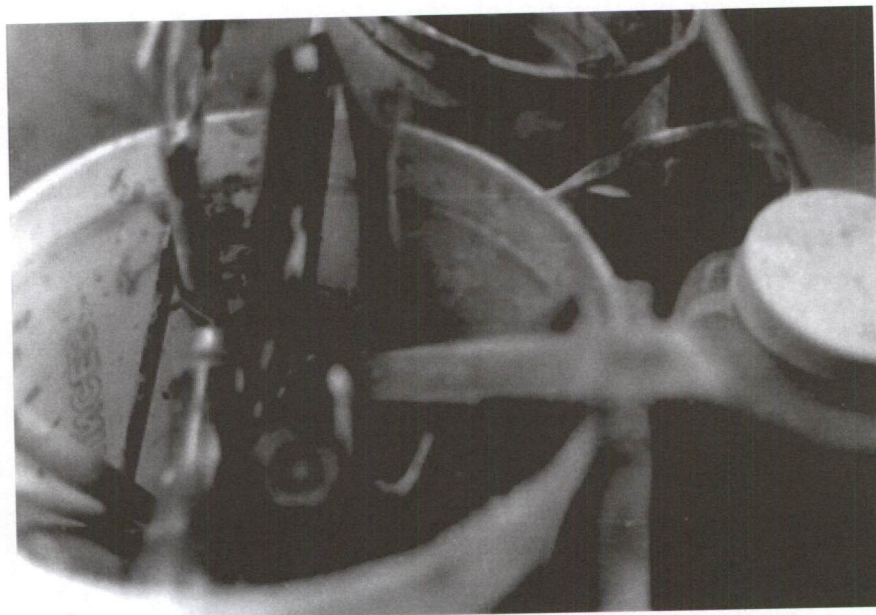
I observed her smile, a sweet grin that revealed all of her intentions. "Hello." She said it barely above a whisper, luring him. He eagerly sat in the desk across from her, waiting for her as if he were trained to do so. She said nothing, keeping her clever mind or lack thereof concealed, and pulled a lollipop out of her purse. She unwrapped the sweet and placed it into her mouth.

He cocked his head to the side, engrossed in the lascivious maneuver. I watched as the lollipop entered and exited her mouth, rubbing against her lips in a sinful caress that almost made me turn away. But I continued to watch, mentally scheduling a visit to the confessional, as her tongue curled around the slick, saccharine orb. He grinned lustfully, waiting for the next action. She returned the gesture and her lips revealed a tinted cerulean smile. My eyes widened as I watched him grimace and turn away. Upset, she pulled the lollipop out of her mouth.

"Damn! Blue raspberry!" she bawled.

Paint

KATIE ELKINS



The Song Remains The Same

LUCIAN TUCKER

The sky is a strong stroke of black. Sometimes, using a thick brush, Mother Nature randomly dabs the sky with some white, but tonight she left the sky naked. Tonight, therefore, is an ideal night for astronomers and those who enjoy occasionally glancing at the sky in awe.

The constellation Andromeda is shining extra bright tonight. Despite being millions of light years away, Andromeda actually contains a galaxy that is visible to the naked eye—even with all the pollution in the air.

Those not gazing at the sky on the corner of Broad Street and Market Street will surely notice the floods of mannequins pouring out of a bus numbered “32.” Faceless, some of the mannequins are a clean white, while others are solid black. Some red, some brown. Some are tall and some are short, but they are all flowing towards the open gate marked “Broad Street Subway.”

One by one, the mannequins spill down the orange sets of stairs, moving pass the metal turnstiles and pass the many metal benches, ceasing only when they have reached their desired train stop.

Among the pool of mannequins is a guitar player. Fresh out of college, he is a freelance graphic designer by day, but plays his guitar at various venues throughout the city at night.

The guitar player, unlike the mannequins, has a face. He has a nose, and a pair of eyes and ears, and even a mouth. He smells, sees, hears, and says things that the mannequins do not understand.

The guitar player is wise, but he lacks the gray hairs to prove it. In fact, if asked at this very moment, he would insist the opposite for he has not been able to write a song in over a month. It was about a month ago that his mother passed away from drug overdose—she was having a hard time dealing with her husband’s death. The guitar player was always there for her, but now, he has no one. “Don’t die,” was what he said to her right before she

stopped breathing.

Lonely, the guitar player gazes at the sky before venturing down into the subway station.

"Why you do that, Shirl?" one unfortunate mannequin squawks from a bench as the guitar player passes by. With her arms folded and pressed closely to her flat breast, she shakes her head from left to right. Her lips, seemingly stretching for a kiss, move between sentences. Words are being formed but the corresponding sounds are never released.

The guitar player can't help but to stop and watch the unfortunate mannequin, open-mouthed by the unfortunate mannequin's unfortunate situation.

Without thinking, the guitar player places his black guitar case on the ground, pulling out his guitar—a red acoustic Martin with an ebony fingerboard and six fresh bronze strings. Once he has the guitar comfortably placed over his shoulder and neck, he pushes his guitar case against the nearest wall as to not disturb the flow of the many mannequins.

The unfortunate mannequin notices nothing. Her head is raised, but her eyes are closed.

Nervous, and feeling awkward, the guitar player approaches the unfortunate mannequin slowly, with his left hand firmly gripping the neck of his guitar and his right hand hugging his guitar's body. He stops five feet in front of her and hovers his right hand over the rosette inlaid sound hole of his guitar.

His mind is blank—no chords. He wants to walk away but there is something about the unfortunate mannequin that intrigues the guitar player, and that is enough to make him stay.

To begin, he decides on a simple chord and strums it rhythmically with his short fingernails, hoping that a beautiful melody will jump from his mind. He plays and plays, but nothing. The world around him is getting darker and darker.

The unfortunate mannequin is oblivious to it all, occasionally muttering random words to herself. But something she says triggers the guitar player to change chords.

"Don't die."

Time slows down as the guitar player switches chords. He strums his red guitar softly, never missing a fret. Sparks from his guitar illumine his fingers as he fingerpicks a chorus, but the scene remains dark. The mannequins neglect to acknowledge the guitar players beautiful notes and notice him no more than the unfortunate mannequin who is

biting her nails, still talking to herself.

The subway train all the mannequins have been waiting for drives in and out, and another wave of white and black and red and brown come pouring down the orange sets of stairs.

The guitar player strums harder and harder, making sure not to withhold a single emotion.

The first mannequin of the new wave drops a dollar into the guitar player's empty guitar case and keeps moving. Like zombies, the second, third, and fourth follow suit, dropping spare dollars and quarters into the black case. But the fifth stops.

As the unfortunate mannequin rocks back and forth, licking her lips and swearing, the fifth mannequin stares. Then, the fifth mannequin gazes at the guitar player as he contorts five fingers to hold a chord, strumming relentlessly. Words of injustice, and sadness, and love, and hate, begin to flow like water from the guitar player's lips, and they splash the fifth mannequin in her face. Amazed, she freezes.

Slowly, other mannequins join her, staring at the unfortunate mannequin who is oblivious to everyone and everything, and then staring at the guitar player before freezing.

Eventually, the crowd of mannequins forms a large enough crowd that every wave of mannequins thereafter is forced to stop in mid-motion. They do not have to see the unfortunate mannequin and guitar player—hearing his lyrics and guitar is enough. But the guitar player's hands are slowly tiring, and his throat is beginning to burn. He slows his strumming and loosens his grip on his chords until eventually all the mannequins leave. They drop off one by one like a leaking faucet, eventually dropping in groups until not a single mannequin is left except the unfortunate mannequin and the fifth mannequin from the second wave.

The guitar player stops playing, but the strings of his guitar continued to vibrate for much longer. When the guitar's bronze strings cease to vibrate, the fifth mannequin walks off, and the guitar player just stands.

Still, the unfortunate mannequin rocks back and forth, licking her lips, swearing and biting her nails while whispering nothing into the air.

Wishing Stars

MEGAN PALOS

I bought the narrow, glossy strips of folding paper from a small shop on a street corner, next to a bakery that sold pork-filled, steamed white buns and slushy fruit drinks with gummy tapioca pearls that settled at the bottom. I picked up a pack, attracted to the shiny swaths that glimmered like diamonds underneath the flickering fluorescent lighting.

"Those are wishing stars," said a woman standing behind me. She wore a friendly smile on her face, her almond-shaped eyes almost disappearing in the amiable gesture. I realized she had been watching me all along, as she probably did with so many people day after day. I read the plastic nametag that was safety-pinned to her chest. Mi Yeon, it said, a spicy and exotic name.

"Wishing stars?" I repeated, turning the package over. Neatly tucked into the package was a set of directions depicting how to fold the stars along with explanations tidily typed in Korean.

"You fold them," Mi Yeon explained. She pulled a strip of similar paper out of her pocket. Like a clown making balloons at a circus, she began to fold and twist the paper. Like a child at the circus, I watched in awe. I hardly realized that my mouth hung open as she pushed in the sides and pinched, forming five perfect points that gave birth to a tiny pink star. Mi Yeon placed it in my hands. "You fold them like this, pinch the ends, and you have a star. When you're done, you wish on them. You can give them to someone if you like. They make great presents."

The performance had me sold, and I walked out of the store with five packages of folding paper. I didn't care that I hadn't picked up on anything that Mi Yeon had shown me. I didn't even care that I couldn't read Korean. All I could think about were the potential wishes I had tucked away in my purse.



